AL-ISHARAH ILA SALAT AL-ISTIKHARAH

(The Reference to Invoking Allah to Guide
one to the Right Course of Action)

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<u>In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious,</u>

<u>the Most Merciful</u>

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Introduction

Praise be to Allah Whom we ask for help and forgiveness. We refuge to him from the evils of ourselves and from our bad deeds. He who Allah guides towards piety, nobody can lead him astray and he who Allah makes astray, nobody can lead him to good actions. We testify that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad (PBUH) is his messenger.

There is no doubt that trusting in Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta'ala)[1] is one of the most positions of bondage (Uboudiyah) and one of the most sublime levels of monotheism (AL-Tawhid). It is, as AL-Imam Ahmad said:

"The heart action that brings its tranquility and by which submission to Allah, The Majestic[2], is achieved. It reveals the mankind are delegating all their matters to their creator who is fully aware of their destinies.

Thus, the Prophet urgency on Salat AL-Istikharah to enable the slave (of Allah) to draw the meaning of trusting Allah, thinking well of Him, submitting his heart to Allah, delegating all his maith this destiny and refuging to Him in the invocation (Du'a) and devotion to Allah[3].

Because of the importance of Salat AL-Istikhtter to Him, being content with what he achieves of the fore-mentioned noble meanings and as we live in illusive years that leave the wise confused and make the slave refuge to Allah asking for guidance of what to do, it is a must to show the rules and behaviors of Salat AL-Istikhara, and drawing the attention to the mistakes committed in it with an easy understandable method (way) and through a short available message.

May Allah guide us to right course of action !

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(1) Glorified and Exalted.

(2) AL-Jaleel.

(3) Worshipping.

AL-ISTIKHARA DEFINITION

AL-ISTIKHARAH is invoking Allah to guide one to the right course of action. It is said: "Invoke Allah to help you do good, and He will respond".

AL-ISTIKHARAH INVOCATION

Jabir Bin Abdullah, May All be contented with him[(4)], said:
The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to teach us AL-Istikharah in all our matters as he teaches us the Surah[(5)] of the Holy Quran. Jabir said:

"If one of you intends to do Istikharah, he must perform two Raqa', not of the imposed ones and then say: "O God (Allah)! I'm invocating You through Your knowledge. I'm asking You power through your power. I'm asking You of Your great favor. You can and I can't, You know and I don't. You are the Knower Omniscient."

O Great God! If You know that this matter is for the benefit of my religion, life and future –or for my present and future- make me destined to do it, simplify it for me and make it blessed for me. But if You know that this matter is an evil for me in my religion life and my future –or in my present and future- make it leave me and make me abandon it.

Make me directed towards the good deed wherever it was. Then let me feel content with it. Then, he(Muhammed-PBUH- said he names his need.

Ibn Ibrahim Al Qayim, May Allah be mercy to him[(6)], said explaining "O God! I am invoking you through Your knowledge, asking You power through your power and asking you of your great favour". This is a trust in Allah and a delegation.

Then he said, "You know and I don't, you can but I can't and You are the Knower of the unseen".

This is a confession to Allah of one's having no knowledge, might and power but Allah has and begging Him, Subhanahu, by using his epithets, the dearest things besought of by His slave beggars. Then he asked Allah to do that matter for him if it were good for him, sooner or later and to make him abandon that matter if it were harmful to him sooner or later.

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(4) Ridiya Allahu Anhu.

(5) Chapter.

(6) Rahimahu Allah.

This is what he needs in his request. He can do nothing but to be satisfied with the judgment of Allah. He said, "Direct me to the good deed wherever it is and make me satisfied with it.

The Reasons of Istikharah

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The Istikharah is for every permissible thing. It will not be in abandoning forbidden deeds (AL Haram) or in hated matters (AL Makrooh) or in a duty (task) action or a desirable action.

Ibn Abi Jamrah said: For the enjoined duty, and the desirable, one must not make Istikharah for doing them. The forbidden and the hateful Istikhara must be made for leaving them. Then, Istikhara is limited to the permissible. And for the desirable if two matters are contradicting, one must choose the first only and confine his Istikhara in it.

Istikhara is desirable for all matters: big or small. What Jaber, May Allah be pleased with him[7], said: "Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to teach us AL-Istikhara for all matters", is an evidence of generality and one shouldn't despise anything for its smallness: too many small things, considered improperly, cause a great harm if they are implemented or abandoned.

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[7] Radiya Allah Anhu.

AL-Istikharah Time

AL-Istikhara will be after counseling. AL-Imam AL-Nawawi said: Before Istikharah, it is desirable to counsel the man who is known for good advice, pity and experience and faithful to his religion and knowledge. Allah, Ta'ala said: "And consult them in the affairs". "AL-Imran: 159".

If he did so and found that it is pro his benefit, he would invoke Allah for guidance according to that matter.

I said: Then, after the Istikhara he does what he has intended to do. If there were a benefit in this matter, it will be performed easily by the will of Allah, but if there were a disadvantage (evil) in it, Allah wil lmake him get rid of it, by His will. This is the blessing of AL-Istikhara.

Because if the slave invokes Allah for guidance, Allah will not lead him astray and He (Allah) will inspire him to do that action if it were good for him or abandon it if it were his benefit to do so. Why not?! And he invokes His Lord saying, "O God! If You know that this matter is for the benefit of my religion life and future- or for my present and future, make me destined to do it and simplify it for me. Then make it blessed for me. But if You know that this matter is an evil for me in my religion and future, make me leave and make me abandon it. Direct me towards the good deed wherever it was. Then let me be content (satisfied)with it.

He who knows this, is aware that Istikhara is the secret of AL-Tawfiq (success). Allah is AL-Muwafiq (the success giver).

AL-Istikharah cannot be when one is in a state of hesitation because Muhammad (PBUH) said, "If one of you is about to do something". And all the invocation shows that.

If a Muslim was hesitating in choosing a matter and he desires to make Istikhara, he has to choose one matter and make Istikhara for it and then go ahead and do it. If that thing were good for him, Allah will make it easy and bless it. If it were otherwise, it will be disposed of. Allah will guide him to the right beneficial thing for him by the wish of Allah (Subhanahu)[8] . This is known for those who have tried and practiced it.

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(8) Exalted.

The Description of Salat AL-Istikhara

Salat AL-Istikharah is two Raq'a, not of the imposed prayers. AL-Imam AL-Nawawi said: It seems that it can be done by two Raq'a of the Sunan and the Rawatib and Masjid greeting … etc of AL-Nawafil (extra prayers). We understand from AL-Nawawi speech that one may show his intention to do Salat AL-Istikhara and that prayer itself or he may not do that. This is what the Hadith shows.

AL-Iraqi said: If he wanted to do the matter before starting AL Ratibah…etc, and he prayed without showing his intention to do AL-Istikharah and if he, after the prayer completion, wants to perform AL-Istikhara inovation, it seems that it is permissible.

AL-Hafith, in "Fath AL-Bari" opposed AL-Iraqi, AL-Hafith said: "It seems it must be said: If he intended that very prayer (itself) and Salat AL-Istikharah together, that will be enough. That contradicts if he didn't intend and left the Masjid greeting (Tahiyat AL-Masjid), because it is intended to occupy the place with invocation. Salat AL-Istikharah is intended to have the prayer and invocation, within or after it because it seems that the prayer (Salah) and Dua'h (invocation) are to be after the existence of the willingness to do the matter".

It seems that there are no specified two Raqua' but they are not of the religious duty :if a Moslem intends a matter and performs the two Raqu'a after noon prayers ,for example, says Al- Istikharah invocation,he will accomplishes what is required. That is apparent as Al Nawawh and Al- Iraqi remarked previously. And Allah knows the best.

What is read in AL-Istikhara two Raq'a Prayer

It is not imposed to read a certain Sura (chapter) or an Aya (verse) after AL-Fatiha. Al Imam AL-Nawawi, in his book 'ALATHKAR' said that one reads AL-Kaferoon and AL-Ikhlas in the two Raqa'a.

AL-Iraqi said, "I couldn't find anything in the Hadith books stating that one must read certain Ayat in the two Raqa'as of AL-Istikhara. But, what AL-Nawawi said is suitable.

But this occasion doesn't justify the saying that it is legal and assigned. May Allah grant us blessings.

AL Hafith Bin Hijr said, "There is no evidence on reading Surat AL Kaferoon (the infidels) and AL-Ikhlas (The Purity).

The Time of Invocation

From AL Hadith,, invocation comes after prayer (Salat). If invocation occurs during pray, it may be enough. They may occur in succession on condition that Salah precedes invocation as the place of invocation is AL-Sujud (prostration) or AL Tashahud (Testification).

Ibn Abi Jamrah said: The Wisdom for having AL-Salat before invocation is that Istikharah is intended to combine the good of lifetime and that of the Hereafter. Here the Muslim needs to knock the door of AL Malik (the Sovereign). Nothing is more convenient and more successful than the prayer (AL-Salat) because it includes the Glorification of Allah, praising Him and the sore need for Him in destiny and situation.

Will invocation be before or after Tasleem. (Salutation: saying AL Salam Aleikum Wa Rahmatullah) from the prayer? Invocation place is after AL-Salam: Propher Muhammad, PBUH said: "If anyone of you wanted to do that matter (AL-Istikhara), he has to pray two Raqa' except Farida (imposed prayer and then say "AL-Istikhara invocation").

It seems that he meant, after AL-Salam. Sheikh AL-Islam chose that Istikhara invocation comes before AL-Salam.

The Interest in Invocation Words is a Religious duty

Jaber said: The Messenger of Allah, (PBUH) used to teach us Istikharah as the Surah (chapter) of Quran. This shows the complete extreme care in this invocation (Dua'a) maintaining its letters and words order, preventing its increase or decrease, studying for it and preserving it.

One of AL-Istikhara terms is that it must be through this invocation (Dua'a) as mentioned by prophet Muhammad verbally: in his words not in other words, even if they give the meaning. The reason behind that is the word structure narrated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself has wisdom, benefit and specialty we don't know.

If that hadn't been the case, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) wouldn't have been careful to teach it to his companions as he does with teaching them a Sura (chapter) of the Holy Quran. Undoubtedly, the Prophet's speech has a secret unavailable in the speech of anyone else.

The slave shouldn't consider his ignorance or his bad memory as excuses, especially in his religion matters. A Muslim must learn this wording form because he can't do without asking guidance from his Lord concerning a lot of matters that interest him and he can't tell whether it is bad or good for him. He who asks for advice will not be disappointed. But if he can't memorize this form exact wording, and he can't read it from a book, he can invocate using other words that give their glorious meaning. Allah, only, knows.

Mistakes Committed in AL-Istikharah

First: Putting as a condition the sleep dream after Istikhara prayer. For example, the one who makes Istikhara puts a condition of seeing what he has intended or something green or something white for the good action and something red or black if what he intends has nothing good in it.

Second: One of the common mistakes in AL-Istikharah chapter, is that of the rosary (beads), made by or made for the one who needs guiding : one takes a rosary and murmurs some words on it asking what he needs. Then he confines some of its beads between his hands and counts them. If they had an odd number, he would change his mind and abandon what he had intended. If the beads were even in number, he would consider his intention good and he goes ahead to implement it.

Third: The cup Istikharah: It is generally performed by another person for the man making the Istikharah, a man or a woman.. It is done in this manner: The one who is making Istikhara drinks the coffee introduced to him and turns the cup over (upside down). Then, he gives the cup to the cup-reader, who looks at it where the coffee residuals make various drawings and shapes, as any other residual in a pot does when it is turned over. The cup reader imagines what he/she desires, telling too many stories to the one who needs guidance. The latter will not leave the cup reader without having his head full of these myths.

Fourth: The Istikhara of AL-Mandal (fortune-telling). Its procedure is as follows:

A cup full of water is put on the hand-palm of a certain person with some special stripes in his palm at a certain day of the week. The astrologer starts uttering and murmering some un -understandable speech calling some Jinie asking them to fetch the accused criminal.

Fifth: The sand Istikhara:

This method is done as follows:

The person makes intersecting lines in sand. Then, he counts these lines arithmetically. So, he extracts the persons sign of the Zodiac (Burj). He reveals it in a book he brought for this purpose. The astrologer tells the person his past and future life-story, as the astrologer claims.

The same words said to that person have been told to others as long as they belong to the same sign (of the Zodiac).

Sixth: The hand-palm Istikharah:

This is not an exception. The palm-reader uses his physiognomy power. The person's inner palm lines help the astrologer, as he claims, to narrate the future life of that person.

Seventh: The Istikharah of the Holy Quran book (AL-Mushaf). It is the action of opening AL-Mushaf randomly. If one's sight falls upon Na'eem Ayah, he will go ahead and do what he has intended to do but if his sight fall on torture Aya, he abandons what he has intended to do.

I said: what is more surprising is opening the Mushaf when naming a newly-born child if he will see the name of a female or it may be a present tense verb or a past tense one or a gerund, or an adverb of time or an adverb of place or a noun or an epithet of holy men or belongs to angels or devils…!!

All are the same. There is no difference.

Eighth: AL-Istikharah on behalf of others.

Here, one asks another to pray and invocate Allah for him. The most confusing things for AL-Mufti, to tell that is not allowed in the case of the woman's menstruation and postpartum period. If she were in a difficult situation, and asked Allah for guidance without praying, Allah is All-the Hearing, the Hearkener. And Allah only knows.

Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Makhloof said: Our good ancestors used not to adhere except to the Istikharah as narrated in the correct Holy Hadith till a category of people came. These stuck to AL-Sharia' essence bad innovations. They established the sleep dream Istikharah and then the Mushaf Istikharah and so on. They articulated these methods descriptions. All those are considered hateful innovations. No wise man can depend on them in doing or leaving anything.

Abu Bakr AL Tartoushi and Abu Bakr Bin AL-Arabi stated that the AL-Istikharah by AL-Mushaf is forbidden. They considered it a type of a shameful act of devil (Satan).

The Wisdom of AL-Istikharah

AL-Istikharah is an expression where a believer shows his love to his Lord and trust in Him.

Man always needs guidance in all his matters. Therefore, AL-Shari'a asked him to consult the other human beings and ask the Creator guidance by AL-Istikharah.

My muslim brother, Ask your Lord guidance in your affairs, refuge to Him. He makes your invocation for guidance easy and smooth.

Do Istikharah after AL-Sunan and AL-Rwatib prayer or do two Raq'a for that prayer. Then, you will turn to Allah (repent) more and draw nearer to Him. Don't pay attention to what people used to: excess or depending on others to do AL-Istikharah. Adhere to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH).

So, your situation will be good in life and in the Hereafter. How blessed is he who practiced it and spread it among people.

If something bad occurs to you or you encounter a misfortune you don't like, don't undermine the importance of AL-Istikharah. Don't think bad of Allah. Your benefit may be in what you hate. Allah, Ta'ala, said: "It may be that you dislike a thing good for you and that you like a thing bad for you. (AL-Baqarah: 216).

If you can predict the unseen and everything is revealed to you, you can't but choose what Allah has chosen for you and be satisfied with what Allah wants for you. If you understand, you will win and submit to Allah and you will be safe.

O God, who His slave ask for guidance, leaving nobody live in vain, guide me to the best method. You have in hands, all piety means.

Finished. Praise be to Allah.